

MOTION BY SUPERVISOR MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH

JANUARY 9, 2007

AGE OF EMANCIPATION

Each year, more than 4,000 youth emancipate from California's foster care system, of whom more than 1,300 emancipate from Los Angeles County. Just as youth who leave their families as young adults depend upon the continued support of their birth parents to meet their individualized needs, so do youth emancipating from foster care. These needs may include housing; educational or employment support; and/or specialized supports as youth transition to the adult service systems designed to accommodate their higher level needs.

Under existing law, services are provided to foster youth until the age of 18, but may continue until age 19 if the youth meets specific requirements such as high school or equivalent vocational/technical program attendance or the pursuit of a high school equivalency certificate. However, research shows that most youth who emancipate without permanency or a connection to a committed adult do so without adequate resources to succeed. This places them at greater risk of unemployment, homelessness, incarceration, substance abuse/mental health issues and long-term dependence on public assistance.

MOTION

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Burke	_____
Knabe	_____
Antonovich	_____
Yaroslavsky	_____

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Last year, Assembly Bill 1983 (Bass) and Senate Bill 1289 (Cedillo), each of which called for additional services to emancipating teens beyond age 18, were introduced in the California Legislature. Neither was enacted into law due to concerns about the costs involved. These concerns are short-sighted. Cost benefit analyses demonstrate that failure to provide adequate services to emancipating youth ends up costing the public significantly more. Every effort should be made to ensure that each youth emancipating from our county's foster care system is afforded the continued opportunities available to achieve success and become a fully contributing member of society.

I, THEREFORE, MOVE that the Board of Supervisors direct the Departments of Children and Family Services, Probation and the Chief Administrative Office to work with the State legislative delegation, the County Welfare Directors Association and the California Youth Connection, to sponsor much needed legislation in the 2007-08 State Legislative Session to provide enhanced services and financial supports to emancipated foster youth between the ages of 18 and 21 years.

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